

Message Text

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ACTION L-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 PRS-01 SS-15 NSC-05 INR-05

CIAE-00 RSC-01 /036 W

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P 212300Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8390

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: CHARPENTIER INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT VESCO

REF: SAN JOSE 3999

1. ROBERT VESCO MET FOR A REPORTED THREE HOURS WITH MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY MARIO CHARPENTIER FRIDAY EVENING (OCTOBER 18) IN THE MINISTER'S OFFICE.

THE MEETING HAD BEEN CALLED BY CHARPENTIER AS PART OF HIS INVESTIGATION INTO REPORTS THAT VESCO HAD ILLEGALLY BROUGHT ARMS INTO COSTA RICA. REPORTERS WERE GIVEN A TRANSCRIPT OF WHAT PURPORTEDLY WAS THE CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW. THIS TRANSCRIPT WAS PUBLISHED IN SATURDAY'S "LA NACION." ("LA REPUBLICA" SENT NO REPORTERS TO THE EVENT AND MADE NO MENTION OF THE INTERVIEW.) THE SMALL AFTERNOON PAPER, "LA PRENSA LIBRE," PRINTED A SHORT RESUME.

2. VESCO APPEARED WITH HIS COSTA RICAN LAWYERS, JOSE MARIA PLA AND ANTONIO ROBLES, AND BODYGUARD/ TRANSLATOR ALBERTO ABREU. CHARPENTIER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE MINISTRY LAWYER, FERNANDO MONTERO, AND SEVERAL OTHER OFFICIALS.

3. ACCORDING TO "LA NACION'S" VERSION OF THE
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TRANSCRIPT, CHARPENTIER'S QUERIES TO VESCO FOCUSED

UPON THE USE OF THE AIRCRAFT N33TR WHICH ALLEGEDLY BROUGHT ARMS TO COSTA RICA FROM THE UNITED STATES ON APRIL 19 FOR VESCO'S USE.

4. VESCO REPORTEDLY DENIED THAT HE HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE N33TR AIRCRAFT. HE SAID THAT MR. LE BLANC ARRANGED FOR THAT PARTICULAR FLIGHT AND THAT LE BLANC'S STATEMENT TESTIFIES TO THAT EFFECT. AT ANOTHER POINT, VESCO SAID THAT HE HAD NOT ASKED RICHARDSON TO BRING HIM ANYTHING ON THE AIRCRAFT AND DENIED THAT HE HAD EVER ASKED ANYONE TO BUY HIM ARMS IN THE UNITED STATES. HE ADDED LATER THAT HE HAD PURCHASED IN COSTA RICA A .38 CALIBER REVOLVER, A .22 CALIBER REVOLVER, AND A SMALL ARM FOR HIS WIFE.

5. VESCO WENT INTO SOME DETAIL, ACCORDING TO "LA NACION," TO EXPLAIN THAT RICHARDSON HAD SHOWN HIM (AND THESE PROOFS WERE PRESENTED TO CHARPENTIER) DOCUMENTARY PROOF THAT THE ARMS REFERRED TO IN THE JACKSON COMMITTEE REPORT ARE PHYSICALLY PRESENT IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. THE DATE OF THIS PROOF WAS NOTED BY VESCO TO BE OCTOBER 2, 1974. VESCO SAID HE DID NOT KNOW IF THESE ARMS HAD EVER BEEN IN COSTA RICA, BUT THAT HE DID NOT THINK THEY HAD BEEN.

6. IN RESPONSE TO CHARPENTIER'S QUESTION ABOUT VESCO'S INTEREST IN BUILDING A MACHINE GUN FACTORY IN COSTA RICA, VESCO REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE TURNED DOWN A PROPOSAL FROM A MR. GRAYDON WHO WANTED VESCO TO FINANCE SUCH A VENTURE. VESCO REPORTEDLY SAID THIS WAS NOT THE TYPE OF ENTERPRISE HE WAS INTERESTED IN FINANCING AND, MOREOVER, COSTA RICA LACKS RAW MATERIALS FOR SUCH A BUSINESS.

7. WITH REGARD TO THE PILOT DAVID MILLER'S TESTIMONY THAT HE ACCIDENTALLY SAW A WEAPON IN THE AIRPLANE AS IT WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE LOS ANGELES FOR COSTA RICA, VESCO WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT IF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MILLER'S TESTIMONY WAS TRUE, WHICH HE DOUBTED, THE ARM MIGHT HAVE BEEN OFFLOADED AT A STOP IN THE U.S. BEFORE THE PLANE PROCEEDED TO COSTA RICA.

8. VESCO REPORTEDLY DISMISSED SENATOR JACKSON'S INVESTIGATION AS ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL AND DESIGNED TO FURTHER HIS PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS. HE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT HE HAD INVITED THE SENATOR AND HIS

INVESTIGATORS TO VISIT COSTA RICA, BUT THAT THE INVITATION HAD BEEN REFUSED.

9. THE OCTOBER 20 PRESS CARRIED A NEWS ITEM FROM THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY'S OFFICE STATING THAT ON WEDNESDAY (OCTOBER 23) CHARPENTIER WOULD DELIVER TO PRESIDENT ODUBER HIS CONCLUDED INVESTIGATION OF THE VESCO ARMS INVOLVEMENT ALLEGATIONS. NO MENTION WAS MADE ABOUT A PUBLIC RELEASE. "LA NACION" NOTED THAT ODUBER IS FOLLOWING THE INVESTIGATION CLOSELY. "LA NACION" ALSO RAN AN AP DISPATCH FROM WASHINGTON REVIEWING ASPECTS OF THE EXTRADITION LAW PROCESS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND STATING THAT VESCO'S BUSINESS AND PERSONAL FRIEND PEPE FIGUERES IS THE DOMINANT POLITICAL PERSONALITY IN COSTA RICA.

10. COMMENT: THE SUPERFICIAL QUESTIONS AND PREDICTABLE RESPONSES IN THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT HAVE LEFT THE IMPRESSION AMONG CONCERNED OBSERVERS THAT THE GOCR IS PREPARING THE PUBLIC FOR GIVING VESCO A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SANJO04032
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740302-0499
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741030/aaaaazkk.tel
Line Count: 137
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION L
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SAN JOSE 3999
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 SEP 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <05 MAR 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHARPENTIER INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT VESCO
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS, (VESCO, ROBERT), (CHARPENTIER, MARIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005